



Issue No 96 December 2012



A Merry Christmas to all our readers and advertisers

Police surgery

POLICE from the Rural Neighbourhood Policing Team at Honiton will be at the following locations to give residents an opportunity to go along and meet them.

PCSO Phil Anning said: "Please feel free to use these times to come and raise any concerns you may have or just to have a chat with your local officers."

- December 12th** Upton, Outside school 3-4pm
December 18th Broadhembury, The Square 8.30-9.30am
December 19th Dunkeswell, Culme Way 9.15-10.15am
December 19th Yacombe, Village Hall 3.15-3.45pm

Stockland website

WORK has started on a new website for Stockland.

A local 'web group' is being set up and volunteers are needed to help with new ideas for content, to work on the technical aspects of redevelopment and to become regular contributors.

Lots of interested people each contributing now and again will create a vibrant site without overburdening any individual.

Contact the group at web.group@stockland.org.uk and we will send you the latest news, and full contact details.

Jubilee tree

YARCOMBE Parish Council has purchased an oak tree (*quercus robur*) to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee year.

After a site visit to establish the best position for the tree it will be planted on December 8th, after the Christmas Market. A plaque by the tree will read Diamond Jubilee 2012.

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Nursery destroys saplings as a precaution against ash dieback

A FOREST nursery on the edge of the Blackdown Hills has decided to destroy 7,000 healthy ash saplings as a precaution, and to raise the profile of woods and forests.

The West Country has had no cases of tree disease Chalara ash dieback but Perrie Hale Nursery partner Nick Davey decided to act anyway.

He explained the decision by saying: "At the moment the West Country is free of the disease, and we want it to stay that way."

Mr Davey and staff burned their ash saplings and, in a statement to customers, Mr Davey said: "We made the difficult decision to burn clean, healthy stocks of ash - at considerable expense to ourselves - as a preventive measure to ensure that, as is our policy, we do all we can to ensure the sale of strong healthy saplings for planting."

He also explained that ash plants can only be moved into or within the country if accompanied by a plant passport saying they come from a recog-

nised disease-free area.

He considered it unlikely that plant passports could be issued before spring 2013, which would have made the plants too old and set for destruction anyway.

He continued: "We consider this as a price worth paying if it means that we will be allowed to sow ash seed in the spring as usual."

"By taking action we wanted to raise the profile of woods and forests. It is our opinion that the public values them."

The tree disease is described by The Forestry Commission as "a serious disease of ash trees caused by a fungus called Chalara fraxinea (*C. fraxinea*)".

It causes leaf loss and crown dieback, and can lead to tree death.

Infected trees have been found regularly in continental Europe for the last 20 years.

An infected consignment of trees, sent from a Dutch nursery to a nursery in Buckinghamshire - was discovered in February this year. More cases

have since been discovered in England and Scotland. The situation was deemed so serious that central government called a meeting of its emergency committee, Cobra, to discuss the matter.

A Forestry Commission spokesperson said: "C. fraxinea is being treated as a quarantine pest under national emergency measures, and it is important that suspected cases of the disease are reported."

"Hundreds of staff members from government agencies are out checking sites across the UK for signs of the tree disease Chalara ash dieback."

"It's one of several actions to emerge from a meeting of the Government's emergency committee."

Trade between EU member nation is generally unrestricted, but individual member nations can take special measures



◆ Typical ash leaves

in certain situations. As a result, the UK Parliament introduced Plant Health Order 2012 on October 30th prohibiting all imports of ash seeds, plants and trees into Great Britain, and all movement of ash seeds, plants and trees within Great Britain.

When asked what he thinks is the way forward to prevent outbreaks in future, Mr Davey wished that people would "take more care to see where trees and shrubs are grown" and be prepared to pay a little more for home-grown produce.

Despite the loss of his nursery's ash sapling stock, he appeared optimistic under the circumstances and said: "We have come through worse than this." Advice and updates on the ongoing crisis is available online at www.forestry.gov.uk

The Blackdown and East Devon Woodland Association has issued a paper on the perceived effects of ash dieback in the Blackdowns

The history

Chalara was discovered in Denmark, a few years ago and was first found in Ash saplings, but spread to more mature trees over 2-3 years. It is a fungus that itself does not kill the tree, but weakens the tree's immune system and allows other diseases to attack the tree. Local spread may be via rain splash or even transmission by insects. Over longer distances the risk of disease spread is most likely to be through the movement of diseased ash plants and wind. Movement of logs or unsawn wood from infected trees might also be a pathway for the disease. There is no cure at present.

Our Woodland make up

Common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is the third most common broadleaf native tree species in Great Britain after oak and birch. Ash is the predominant tree species in approximately 129,000 hectares of woodland in Britain, and it occurs widely in much other woodland. It is a deciduous, broadleaf species native to much of continental Europe and the British Isles. In the Blackdown and East Devon AONB's there are 6,334 ha of broad leaf woods and many hedge rows all with extensive Ash trees in them. Approx 10 % of our woods and hedge species in the South West is Ash, the effect of the fungi attacking all our Ash would be nothing less than catastrophic.

SYMPTOMS of Chalara fraxinea can be visible on leaves, shoots and branches of affected trees. In severe cases, the entire crown shows leaf loss and dieback and there may also be the formation of epicormic shoots on branches and the trunk.

Foliage

Leaves can suffer from wilting and black-brownish discoloration at the leaf base and midrib. Dieback of shoots and twigs is also very characteristic.

Branches and stems

Small lens-shaped lesions or necrotic spots appear on the bark of stems and branches and enlarge to form perennial cankers. These cause wilting and dieback of



◆ Ash leaves affected by chalara

Landscape

The panoramic views in this area depends on trees, and Ash in particular as they are a major hedgerow tree with a distinctive and characteristic shape. The landscape would change dramatically if all ash were to succumb to the disease from a visual perspective.

Economic

Ash is a major player in the woodfuel sector, with more than 35% of hardwood fuel being made up of Ash, this would especially hit the log market in this area. Although most of the Ash timber is of low quality, there is a small amount being used for local manufacture and wider sales. There would be the cost of containing an outbreak with the Forestry Commission talking about compulsory felling and containment.

To view the full paper log onto www.woodbiz.co.uk

shoots and branches, particularly in the upper crown. Underneath the bark lesions, the wood has a brownish to grey discoloration which often extends longitudinally beyond the bark necrosis.

Whole tree

Trees with withered tops and shoots are very characteristic. Heavily affected trees have extensive shoot, twig and branch dieback and often have prolific epicormic shoots. Chalara fraxinea has also been isolated from the roots of symptomatic trees, as well as from leaves, shoots and branch/stem lesions.

See John Greenshields "Working in Our Woodlands" column on page 8

LAMB & FLAG

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01823 421736 www.lambandflag.co.uk

CHRISTMAS PARTY MENU 2012

Mixed Game Terrine with red onion & cranberry marmalade
 Roasted parsnip Soup w with parsnip crisps & curry crème fraîche
 Smoked Haddock & Prawn Gratin in a white wine sauce
 with lightly toasted breadcrumbs

■■■■■

Traditional Roast Turkey Dinner with a pistachio
 stuffing, chipolatas & cranberry sauce
 Bouillabaisse with red mullet, mussels & king prawns
 Chestnut, Hazelnut, walnut & cranberry Loaf
 with a rosemary & orange sauce
 Slow Cooked Local Venison in a juniper & red wine,
 finished with bitter chocolate
 All Served with roast potatoes & roasted vegetables

■■■■■

Christmas pudding with a white brandy sauce
 Poached Pears In mulled wine syrup with vanilla cream
 Zesty lemon Tart Served with a raspberry coulis
 Cheese board

Christmas Menu available from December 1st to December 23rd
 Booking and pre ordered menu choices must be made at
 least seven days from party dinner date.
 Three courses £25.95 per head Two courses £22.95 per head

Dunkeswell company supports Services Disabled Ski Team

Supacat, the Dunkeswell engineering company that produces all terrain vehicles has renewed its support for the Combined Services Disabled Ski Team (CSDST) for the fourth consecutive year.

In addition to financial support, Supacat's engineers lend their expertise to fine tune the sit-ski athletes' equipment. The team's goal is to maximise the chances of the service and ex-service athletes to compete at the 2014 Winter Paralympics in Sochi, Russia.

Supacat's engineers focus on the suspension system used by the sit-ski athletes, applying the expertise they have developed in this area for the company's renowned high mobility vehicles - 'Jackal', 'Coyote' and the SPV400.

The engineers support the athletes with education and advice, specialist equipment selection, ongoing analysis and on-snow data logging so that their suspension is optimised and tuned for all conditions.

In October Supacat's engineers returned from an intensive, four day work package on the indoor slope in Landgraaf, Holland. A full programme of data logging, suspension set-up and tuning was conducted, helping the team's three principle sit-ski athletes to understand their equipment and establish settings for the upcoming season.

Supacat's Head of Marketing and Communications, Jamie Clarke, said "We are delighted to support such a worthy cause for yet another season and we look forward to some impressive re-

sults on snow this winter. Our work with the CSDST suspension systems has given the athletes a real advantage and allows them to compete with confidence knowing that their equipment is set-up and performing correctly.

"Already this has made a significant impact on the team which is reflected in the international podium positions they have been achieving.

"We now have all three sit-ski athletes racing on top of the range, custom built,

suspension systems. With our motor-sport data logging and analysis our engineers can fine tune each athlete's individual equipment to optimise their performance".



◆ JAMIE CLARKE, head of marketing and communications at Supacat with the Combined Services Disabled Ski Team

Christmas party

LUPPITT residents will be holding a Christmas party on Saturday, December 29th in the village hall from 8pm until late.

Entry is free, there will be a bar and music and those attending are invited to bring supper to share.

Local plan blueprint for the future of hills

FROM page 1

calplan@eastdevon.gov.uk or in writing to the Planning Policy Section, East Devon District Council Offices, Knowle, Sidmouth, EX10 8HL. Replies should arrive before 12 noon on Monday 14 January 2013.

Cllr Mark Williamson, Chairman of East Devon District Council's Development Management Committee said:

"We're making a wide reaching plan which sets out an ambitious vision for an East Devon we can all be proud of. This is an outstanding place to live, but it brings with it many challenges in providing the right jobs and homes to help young people stay in East Devon and raise new generations of Devonians.

"It's a complex balance between the need for homes and jobs and the needs of the environment, not to mention the passionate views of those who live in our towns and villages. These views are wide ranging and not always in agreement with the council or even each other, but at the same time it's that passion for the place which helps make East Devon so special.

"Now we're once again calling for everyone's views on the plan whatever they may be, so that the planning inspector will be fully aware of all viewpoints. There is a lot of scope for being heard, including the opportunity to present evidence and argument to the Inspector in person at the public inquiry next year. The scrutiny the plan receives will ensure it strikes the best overall balance for the district and current and future East Devon residents."

To advertise contact
Alex Phryce-Jones on 01297 35750
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An Introduction to Our Practice - Who we are and what we do

The practice is staffed by 8 dedicated and experienced farm animal vets. From branches in Wellington and Broadhembury we cover a large and expanding geographical area that is centered in the Blackdown Hills. As well as dealing with individual clinical cases we are heavily involved with herd and flock planning and advocate a proactive approach to disease control. Most of our dairy clients have a routine fertility visit and we use this opportunity to discuss all aspects of a herd's performance, including mastitis, lameness, fertility and nutrition. We provide an independent voice you can trust to help analyse information from your nutritionist, your fertility records and your milk records and we routinely use modern computer programs such as Interherd, TotalVet or Rumnut.

All of the vets live locally and a number are usually working within the Blackdowns. This means that if you have an emergency we can get to you quickly. It also means that we can deliver drugs to farm easily. Medicines can be put up for collection any time from the Wellington and the Broadhembury branch.



A summary of the services that we offer;

- Dedicated farm vets
- In house mastitis laboratory
- Routine herd fertility visits
- 24/7 local emergency cover
- Nutritional consultancy
- Bull and ram semen testing
- Regular farm walks and staff training including AI, foot trimming and herds-persons courses
- In depth disease investigation for problems including fertility, mastitis, lameness, parasites and youngstock issues
- Access to DairyCo and Duchy funding
- Competitively priced medicines with delivery to farm and weekend availability from practice branches

As farm vets we enjoy our work and we are passionate about the British farming industry and the part we play in it. If you think that what we do might be of interest to you then please give the practice a call on **01823 662286** and speak with one of the team.



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HEMYOCK

news in brief

Affordable homes

WEST of England Developments is seeking planning permission for 12 affordable homes at a site on the Culmstock Road, Hemyock.

This project is supported by Hastoe Housing Association and the Upper Culm Community Land Trust Ltd.

Anyone interested in the affordable homes, should planning permission be granted, is asked to register their names and addresses with the Company Secretary of the Upper Culm Community Land Trust Ltd.

Registration can be made in confidence via e-mail or post to Neil Punnett at 6 Higher Mead, Hemyock.

A letter from the Blackdown Hills AONB supports the provision of affordable housing if a need has been identified in a settlement.

Church flooding

ST MARY'S Parish Church in Hemyock was flooded on Wednesday, November 25th.

Churchwarden David Bawler said: "Thanks are extended to all those who helped clear the debris blockage and erect the porch barrier in the morning and to the small army of volunteers who helped with the clean up operation during the afternoon."

The drying out process is now taking place before the building is sanitised.

The church service on Sunday, November 25th was moved to the Church Room.

'Then and Now'

THE DVD of Hemyock "Then and Now" was sold out at the recent public screening when over 100 people attended two sessions.

More copies of the DVD have now been produced and will be available at the Church Rooms at the Saturday morning Charity Shop.

The Charity Shop opens on the first Saturday of the month between 10am and 12noon.

Council vacancy

A VACANCY on Hemyock Parish Council is being advertised. If ten electors for the area do not demand an election, the vacancy, will be filled by co-option.

Further information or advice on the election is available from Electoral Services on 01884 255255.

Poppy day lunch in Hemyock

A **SELL-OUT LUNCH** organised by local volunteers in Hemyock raised £334.18 for The Royal British Legion 2012 Poppy Appeal.

More than 40 local people tucked in to a three-course lunch at The Blackdown Healthy Living Centre on Remembrance Sunday.

Over £320 worth of raffle prizes were donated by generous local businesses.

A team of five Hemyock volunteers cooked and served the lunch.

The home-cooked menu included two types of paté served with red onion chutney and fresh bread and was followed by slow-roasted 'Ellises Farm' beef and mushroom casserole with carrots, swede, cabbage and roast potatoes. Non meat eaters tucked in to salmon baked 'en papillote'.

A choice of two naughty puddings finished off the culinary treat – apple crumble and fresh cream for some and very sherry trifle for others.

This was all washed down with wine or beer.

Over coffee, the raffle was drawn. The prizes were a £70 chiropractor therapy voucher donated by Sue Moore and won

by David Bawler; £60 acupuncture therapy voucher donated by Kerry Weaton and won by Ann Wyatt-Smith; two £30 osteopath therapy vouchers donated by Martha Price and won by Christine Meads and Robin Donaldson; two handmade cushions donated by 'Sewing Sue' Risdon and won by Judy Barton; Images hair appointment voucher donated by Nicky Emery and won by Sam Mather; two-months PowerPlate membership donated by The Blackdown Healthy Living Centre and won by Jill Standing; bath and hand creams donated by Waitrose won by Ruth Tartaglia; and two aromatherapy wheaty bags donated by Kerry Weaton won by Sam Mather and Jean Colman.

Further donations were received from Ellises Farm, Hemyock (£30), Tesco, Honiton (£20), Wyvern Blinds (£10) and a local resident (£10).

Grateful thanks go to the generosity of the local businesses that supported the event and to The Blackdown Healthy Living Centre and Hemyock Bowls Club for lending everything from salt and pepper pots to wine glasses and much more and most of all to the "Poppy Lunch Catering Team".



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◆ **POPPY DAY LUNCH:** Helpers and (above) guests enjoy the Remembrance lunch in Hemyock

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Gardeners enjoy visit to Cornwall



◆ **MEMBERS** of Hemyock Gardeners' Association are pictured during their enjoyable recent visit to Cornwall.

The trip included visits to the Eden Project, The Lost Gardens of Helligan and Pinsla Garden and Nursery, with accommodation at the Lanhydrock Hotel and a chance to purchase interesting plants.

Twenty-nine members and guests took part and the association hope that similar visits can be planned.

Hemyock Gardeners meet in the Parish Hall on the second Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm. Visitors will be made very welcome. For more information call Brenda Calcraft on 681592.

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MP supporting pig farmers



NEIL PARISH, MP for Tiverton and Honiton, attended the prestigious David Black Awards on in the House of Lords last month.

The award, sponsored by BPEX, is given for a significant and sustained contribution to the British pig industry.

Mr Parish attended as chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Pig and Poultry, which was formed to campaign and raise awareness within Westminster on pig and poultry issues.

Mr Parish also signed the "Give a Fork about Your Pork" board to support British farming.

British pork farmers are struggling against the world-wide escalation in the price of feed grains and soya. Some 65 per cent of the cost of producing a pig is accounted by pig feed.

This year's David Black Award winner was Waitrose director of buying and agriculture strategy Heather Jenkins, who had her award presented to her by the Agricultural Minister David Heath MP.

Speaking at the event Mr Parish said: "I would like to congratulate Heather Jenkins for winning this well deserved reward.

"With poor harvests and the cost of producing a pig rising 25 per cent in the last few weeks we need industry leaders who will think creatively to increase food production and promote British products".

◆ **LOCAL MP** Nick Parish shows his support for pig farmers at the David Black awards at the House of Lords

£1,900 grant to benefit playing field

NATIONAL charity Fields in Trust has awarded a grant of £1,900 to the Dalwood Jubilee Field.

The Dalwood Recreation Trust will use the money to renovate a building on site to use as a sports pavilion.

The trust, nominated the field for the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge, which was launched to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the London 2012 Olympics and

Paralympics

Becoming part of the challenge means the Jubilee Field will be preserved for future generations to use and enjoy forever. The programme gives communities the chance to engage with and celebrate these two historic events in their local area and to benefit from them for years to come.

A spokesperson for Dalwood Recreation Trust said: "We're de-

lighted to have received this funding from Fields in Trust for the Jubilee Field. With their support we have been able to make sure the Jubilee Field will always be there and in better shape for the future.

"We have agreed to purchase the playing field and the building for use as a sports pavilion. The sale documents with Devon County Council should be completed by the end of the year."



◆ **LASTING LEGACY:** Community spirit was evident when residents came out to help with creating a blooming show for the spring.

Five-hundred wild daffodils have been planted next to All Saints Village Hall. The bulbs were provided by All Saints & District Women's Institute to provide a lasting memory of the Diamond Jubilee and residents of all ages helped with the planting.

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APPROVED INSTALLER
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Advertiser's announcement

Monument Fuels celebrate their first anniversary

LOCAL heating oil supplier Monument Fuels, based in Wellington, have recently celebrated their first anniversary.

Owners Andrew Hewitt and Trevor Rolph said: "Our first year has really flown by, and things have gone so well we have just invested in a third tanker to keep up with demand for the upcoming winter.

"With our new full time driver Colin Webber on board we believe we are better positioned than our competitors to react to any cold snap, as both Trevor and myself can jump in a tanker and make deliveries if needed.

"Customers have really appreciated how we are able to give them a quick answer on when we can deliver and we make sure we stick to our promises.

"Our range of tanker sizes also means we can tailor our delivery to our customers' needs.

"Answering calls up to 9pm 7 days a week means customers can order when they find out they need oil, rather than having to wait for an oil company to open up the next working day which is what they have traditionally had to do.

"We intend to keep the business concentrated on the local area so we will maintain the high level of service which we have offered so far."

"We also offer the ability for customers to collect kerosene and gas oil direct from the forecourt style pump at our yard so there is no need for anyone to be without fuel.

"We now also supply bottled gas so we can also help people out with that, so if you have not tried us yet, why not give us a call on 01823 650999."

◆ **ANDREW and Trevor at Monument Fuels**



◆ **HUGE EFFORT:** Minister David Laws with FOBS members and headteacher Sue English and (below) with members of the Let's Get Cooking Club

MP supports primary cooks

THE MINISTER of State for Schools, local MP David Laws, delighted the small village primary school in Buckland St Mary by taking the time to visit them and officially open their new kitchen, for the Let's Get Cooking club.

Headteacher Sue English welcomed the Mr Laws and thanked the Friends of Buckland School who had worked tirelessly for the last year to raise the funds for the kitchen, thanks to backing by the whole community.

With healthy eating high on the agenda for schools policy, Mr Laws took great pleasure in encouraging the enterprise of the school which has taken the out of school club and brought it into class time to give all the children a chance to join in. The club members will pass on their skills to the younger ones.

Speaking to the children, who were all dressed up for Children in Need day, he explained that a lot of the money for their school came from the Government but unfortunately there wasn't enough for some of the things they would like to have. He commented that the £5,000 they had raised was a lot of money for a small village.

After the ribbon cutting, the children from the Let's

Get Cooking group presented Mr Laws with a thank you card they had made before he was offered some of the delicious homemade cakes.



WHERE TO COLLECT YOUR VIEW

THE VIEW FROM THE BLACKDOWN HILLS

will be available at the following outlets every month:

AXMINSTER	Mole Avon TIC
BLAGDON HILL	PO Lamb & Flag
BROADHEMBURY BROADWAY	PO Churchview Surgery
CHARD	Power Shoes TIC
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**Blackdown Hills
Business Association**

Businesses are invited to advertise in the 2013 edition of the Blackdown Hills Directory

Adverts from £45

25,000 door to door delivery by Royal Mail Distribution Spring 2013

48 pages including photos by Pauline Rook

Do you want to take an advert in the 2013 edition of the Blackdown Hills Directory? Over 300 businesses take an advert in every edition. If you would like an advert, you will have to be quick.

Please contact Val Baker at the BHBA for more details and to book on 01823 681484 or email info@bhba.org.uk.



Jacob Lambs at Domett Hill Farm featured in 2011 Blackdown Hills Directory.

To secure your place, booking fees must be paid by Tuesday 18th December 2012.

Artisans are invited to take part in the Artisans' Trail on Friday 10th and Saturday 11th May 2013

Do you want to take part in the 2013 Artisans' Trail and for your business to be featured in the local and regional press?

Nicola Werner Majolica Pottery, Robert Parker - Artist in Wood, David Ball Furniture Restoration, David Lloyd Cabinet Maker, Sweethay Studio Spinners and Weavers, Ellises Farm, Ann Bruford Jewellery and many more business have already signed up.



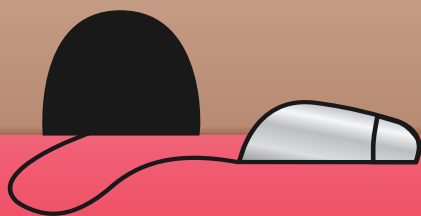
Nicola Werner Majolica Pottery



David Ball restored this in his workshop

For an application form, please contact Val Baker at the BHBA on 01823 681484 or email info@bhba.org.uk.

To secure your place, you will need to send us your £75 booking fee and completed application form by Tuesday, 18th December 2012.



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Woodland Association
with John Greenshields**

WELL it's official, Chalarra is on its way. We don't know when or how hard it will hit us, and I won't dwell on it now as it's too depressing, and information is on our website and others.

Woodland bio security is very important, especially for shooters/walkers/and cyclists who are travelling from wood to wood. I have just set up a bio secure entrance to our woodland, in the light of recent developments, using recommended disinfectants (see forestry.gov.uk/plantsanddiseases) it is the responsibility of everyone in the countryside to be secure.

Safety is paramount too, when working with timber and trees. There was quite recently a prosecution of an employer after the death of a worker under his care. They were cutting a tree down and the worker was on a tractor and loader pushing the tree away from a building, when the tree broke off and fell on the tractor killing him instantly.

This wet weather is also a factor when doing risk assessments for tree felling, as the trees react differently when very wet. And more damage can be done to the flora and fauna, as well as the timber itself, by pulling it through mud, so the real question as to whether it's worth leaving until next year, should be asked.

Now the next big question is a plastic Christmas tree or a real one? Well I can help you make up your mind, firstly the plastic one is made out of fossil fuels, that goes without saying, but it does last a few years. The real tree will not have absorbed any carbon, as some my think, as this happens as the tree gets older, so no environmental saving there so far. The crunch comes at the end of both their uses. The plastic one may last four or five years but will go to land fill eventually, so two negative marks. The real tree will have provided habitat for wildlife while growing, it is neutral carbon, and will go for mulch or woodchip when finished with, so three positive marks. I rest my case.

Please go to the Forestry Commissions website for updates on ash dieback as the situation is changing every day, and it is most important we all be vigilant, and contacts for reporting any sightings are on the site as well.

I would like to wish you a very merry Christmas and a prosperous new year.

My usual contacts 01823660764 parkfarm@tinyonline.co.uk



countrysceneextra

Outlook for wildlife is 'truly grim'

**Written by countryside
correspondent
TONY JACKSON**



THE country scene, as I write, is truly grim. Torrential rain, high, gusting winds and swollen rivers have brought flooding and misery to hamlets and villages in the West Country.

Even as I write more heavy rain is forecast and with it more distress will ensue.

On a personal note, an attempt to drive into Axminster last Wednesday was completely thwarted for the Axe had burst its banks at Weycroft and an attempt to break through to Hawkchurch ended when I discovered a submerged car in deep flood water. I can only give thanks that I live on the summit of a hill with no fear of flooding.

For the wild life of the countryside it is a time of stress and potential hunger.

The dreadful summer has left the hedges bereft of berries and fruit, stubbles which were once a source of winter sustenance for many birds, are now ploughed in the moment the last bales have been carted and the outlook is grim.

Winter feeding, whether by gar-

den owners or farmers who are now subsidised to provide grain for wild birds, is essential. However, purchasing bird food in small quantities is very uneconomical, especially if one has several feeders in operation.

I have found that the best answer is to buy a large sack of mixed food at a cost of around £15. This lasts for a month or more and is much better value than the small packs. Unfortunately nyger seed, which attracts goldfinches, is still very expensive but essential.

The State of the UK's Birds, 2012 has just been published by the RSPB and makes for fairly depressing reading.

I'm never quite sure how much reliance one can place on figures which estimate populations of birds, but it is claimed that in 1966 there were 210 million birds in the

UK, but that figure is down by a fifth to 166 million birds today.

These, I suspect, are very much give or take figures and presumably only apply to resident birds but the fact remains that there has been an overall dramatic fall in numbers.

Our most common bird, the secretive wren, now has a population of 17 million, a drop of three million 11 years ago, while starlings, once seen in vast clouds as they swirled and pirouetted at dusk before roosting, have declined by 80 per cent to around four million, while house sparrows are down from 30 million to 10 million, and song thrushes are almost a rarity.

Curiously enough, house sparrows are my most common garden bird and now rely almost entirely on my feeders for subsistence. The report notes that blue and great tits

are increasing, but if so not on my patch!

I haven't seen a great tit for months and only the occasional blue tit; goldfinches, though, are plentiful unlike greenfinches which have apparently suffered from a disease and are now seldom seen.

Will we, I wonder, one day see parakeets in the West Country? These colourful aliens are now in their thousands in south-west London and are apparently spreading as several have now been reported in the Midlands.

There is, regrettably, no indication that predators such as magpies, crows and sparrowhawks are in decline.

These birds destroy countless nestlings and, in the case of sparrowhawks, adult birds and whilst the corvids can be controlled, sparrowhawks are still fully protected.

The case for some form of management for these and several other raptors can readily be made, but the RSPB will have nothing of it and prefers to close its ears and eyes to the damage being inflicted by certain birds-of-prey.



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COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS

in the Blackdown Hills

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Dan is really enthusiastic about the tradition of

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"Rearing geese for Christmas is an important part of our history.

Until the turkey was introduced to this country, goose was the traditional bird of choice. We are happy to be encouraging the recent re-growth in this tradition. Christmas dinner is the most special meal of the year, why would anyone want to spoil it with turkey?"

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Andy Christian 2012

Visitors welcome at the pottery anytime by appointment and Christmas Sale 6/7/8 Dec 2012 – good directions on www.nicolawerner.com and well signposted from the top of Ford Street.

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Another section of the shop includes locally made soaps aromatherapy products and a selection of drinks from the West Country.

A Hamper Service is available at Christmas and for other times during the year for that unusual gift which can be collected or sent anywhere in the U.K. T

The shop is open on Tuesday to Saturday from 9:30am to 5:30pm. A free delivery is available within a 25 mile radius for orders over £25.

You will receive a friendly welcome at Liquid Assets with plenty of help and advice for all your homebrewing needs, with service as it used to be. 183 High Street, Honiton, Devon, EX14 1LQ



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COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS

in the Blackdown Hills



Come and try an electric bike

AXCESS Electric-Bikes of Honiton has completed a second year with increases in sales in the spring and autumn, but the weather in June and early July and the Olympics in August depressed demand.

The introduction of their own brand range of electric bikes has proved a great success.

"The Axcess Brand bikes have proved popular and reliable in use" said Peter Blackman the director.

The European market for electric bikes continues to expand with

Germany leading the way with sales of 310,000 and The Netherlands second with 178,000. The UK runs a poor 6th with 20,000. The British Electric Bike Association report that 49 per cent of the electric bikes sold in the UK were priced between £801 & £1,300 and 75 per cent of purchasers chose their particular bike because it has a Twist & Go throttle.

The threat to make the throttle illegal in the UK as part of European harmonisation appears to have retreated. This is partly be-

cause the European Commission is considering permitting the throttle as they have recognised that electric bikes can substantially reduce the number of short car journeys which people make.

Electric bikes continue to benefit from research into batteries for the car market so electric bike batteries get smaller, lighter and greater capacity. Some users now report that, when using pedal assist, they achieve 50 miles range on 1 charge.



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Market celebrates 10th anniversary

Wellington Farmers' Market has been running since 2003 and will celebrate its 10th anniversary in 2013. The emphasis of the market continues to be on fresh local produce. By shopping at the market you can buy direct from local producers, support the local economy, reduce food miles & enjoy fresh seasonal food. Meeting the growers and producers means customers have the chance to speak directly to stallholders about what they sell and discuss any particular requirements. Stallholders value customer feedback and are happy to give advice, share tips for cooking or suggest recipes.

Most stallholders are primary producers, growing and making what they sell. Choose amongst beef, lamb, pork & game; fish; free-range eggs & chicken, bread, cakes, pies & pasties; goats milk products, West Country cheeses; local honey, chutneys & preserves, apple juice; seasonal veg, plants & cut flowers and handmade jewellery.

Seasonal visitors include soft fruit, Christmas puddings and wild venison. New producers this year include Freedom Food Pigs, Stefano's Italian farmhouse foods and Sam the Fish. The market has a small café offering simple refreshments.



www.wellingtonfarmersmarket.co.uk

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Wellington Christmas Market

The last market in December is always extra special; carols, music, mince pies and a festive brew all provide a seasonal atmosphere. This year the Christmas market is on December 15th and is open for an extra hour from 9am – 2pm. Many stallholders accept orders for your festive celebrations and have attractively wrapped gifts.

Wellington Farmers Market 2013

The first market of the New Year will be on Saturday 19 January 2013. Next year will be the 10th anniversary of Wellington Farmers Market – look out for special events later in the year. The market is also looking for potential new producers. Do you cook, grow or make something that will add to the market's range of quality local produce? The market is keen to encourage budding entrepreneurs.

Location

Wellington Farmers' Market takes place on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month from 9am-1pm in Castle Hall, also known as the Scout Hall just off Fore Street next to the Co-op supermarket. It can also be accessed from South Street car park. Look for the yellow banners.

Contact Anthea Coate tel: 01823 662157
email: michaelcoate@googlemail.com

or

Louise Perrin tel: 01823 664070
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or contact the individual traders.



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Willow workshop

THE Thelma Hulbert Gallery is holding a day of Christmas willow workshops with Angela Morley, an artist, garden designer and horticulturalist based in Somerset whose workshops are in popular demand.

The event takes place on Wednesday December 5th.

Angela has exhibited with the Thelma Hulbert Gallery for several years and her elegant woven spheres fashioned from natural woods have consistently been one of the gallery's best sellers. These special festive workshops offer the

public the chance to weave a small sphere, ring, wreath or star of their own to take home and treasure.

The gallery are offering three different two hour willow weaving workshops throughout the day at a cost of £25 per person, limited to 12 places per workshop, with all materials provided.

To book simply ring the gallery on 01404 45006 or look in 'Events' for 5 December on www.thelmahulbert.com for more details.

Local duo release their debut album

AFTER a year of major UK concerts, tours, festivals and shows with the likes of Midge Ure, East Devon's Cole Stacey & Joseph O'Keefe have just released their debut joint album 'On Hire' to immediate critical acclaim.

Cole, from Awliscombe, and Joseph, Talaton, began writing and producing their first collaborative album in May, in between big gigs at the likes of 'The Acoustic Festival Of Britain' & Colston Hall & it has instantly born high praise and National airplay on BBC 6 Music despite only just being released. Hav-

ing been described as offering "Quality musicianship & passion in equal measure...delightfully strong" by Acoustic Magazine their album draws on their Devonshire acoustic routes, blended with Parisian Café violins, gypsy jazz guitar & hinges on supple joining of voice and instruments.

They themselves said "It's been an amazing project to work on for us & we've been humbled by everyone's response and support"

With a major UK Tour booked for March/April 2013 the duo are now focusing

on shows in Europe as they build up a following in Paris where they have been working on some new material for the next album. 'On Hire' is available to buy on iTunes, Amazon and from www.colestacey.net before being released in the shops next year.

In the meantime they will be selling copies in Local Devon businesses such as Honiton Music, an East Devon shop that they credit on the album for providing many of the instruments heard on it!

A rug for Santa's sleigh!

AT A VERY successful Blackdowns Market at Taunton in November Santa and his assistant are pictured looking for a warm Shetland rug for his sleigh from the Dommett Hill Farm stall.



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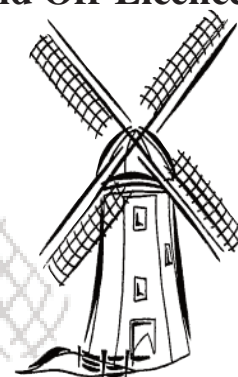
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